



Pediatric Clinic
PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

Cradle Cap

What is cradle cap?

Cradle cap consists of oily, yellow scales on the scalp. It begins in the first weeks of life and is probably caused by adult hormones that crossed the placenta before birth. Without treatment it can last for months; with treatment it usually is cleared up in a few weeks.

How can I take care of my child?

- **Antidandruff shampoo**

Buy an antidandruff shampoo (nonprescription) at the drugstore. Wash your baby's hair with it once a day. While the hair is lathered, massage your baby's scalp with a soft brush or rough washcloth. Don't worry about hurting the soft spot. Once the cradle cap has cleared up, use a regular shampoo twice a week.

- **Softening thick crusts**

If your child's scalp is very crusty, put some baby oil or olive oil on the scalp 1 hour before washing to soften the crust. Wash all the oil off, however, or it may worsen the cradle cap.

- **Resistant cases of cradle cap**

If the rash is very red and irritated, apply 1% hydrocortisone cream (nonprescription) 3 times a day for 7 days.

When should I call my child's health care provider?

Call during office hours if:

- The cradle cap lasts more than 2 weeks with treatment.
- The rash spreads beyond the scalp.
- You have other concerns or questions.